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Redfield Proctor **Secretary of War, 1889-1891**



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Redfield Proctor

Introduction

Redfield Proctor was Secretary of War in President Benjamin Harrison's cabinet from 1889 to 1891. During his tenure he brought about major changes in the military; modernizing and liberalizing many aspects of an archaic system. Often remembered as the entrepreneur who built the world's largest marble business, the Vermont Marble Company, and as the local politician who served his state as governor, town representative and senator, Proctor also earned respect in the wider world of national politics.

Material for this *Quarterly* has been condensed and edited by Nancy Hunter Kennedy from Chapter Four of Chester W. Bowie's doctoral thesis, *Redfield Proctor: A Biography*. Bowie, who received his Ph. D. (History) from the University of Wisconsin (Madison) in 1980, began his research at Proctor Free Library in the early 1970's. Faced with the vast amount of Proctor material in need of cataloguing, he applied for and received a grant which enabled him to undertake the project. He catalogued not only the papers of Redfield Proctor, but also those of Proctor's sons, Redfield and Fletcher, and his grandson, Mortimer, thus performing an invaluable service to future researchers.

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PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

Harrison's 1889 cabinet (l to r) John W. Noble, Sec. of the Interior; John Wanamaker, Postmaster General; Jeremiah M. Rusk, Sec. of Agriculture; William H. H. Miller, Attorney General; Redfield Proctor, Sec. of War; William Windom, Sec. of the Treasury; President Harrison (seated); Benjamin F. Tracy, Sec. of the Navy; James G. Blaine, Sec. of State.

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Redfield Proctor

Secretary of War, 1889-1891

by Dr. Chester W. Bowie
condensed and edited by Nancy Hunter Kennedy

[numbers in brackets refer to page numbers in Bowie's thesis]

President Benjamin Harrison, in making the appointment of Redfield Proctor as Secretary of War, was repaying a political debt. Proctor's influence at the 1888 Republican Convention in Chicago, had clinched Harrison's nomination. Harrison was also aware of Proctor's "impressive management skills and energy" [162], his abilities as a seasoned politician and, of course, his experience as a Civil War veteran. A man with such attributes would be of service to the Army and the country.

At the convention the Vermont delegation was seated in the front row of the hall. [149] Proctor was tall, he had a commanding appearance and his voice was powerful and deep - he could be heard. As the tally of votes proceeded Proctor rose and consistently voted for Harrison. Proctor's "phraseology never changed and his voice never faltered". [149] Harrison had 85 votes on the first ballot. On the eighth roll call, Harrison received the nomination. Vermont was the only state to vote every call for Harrison. Later, on the rostrum, Proctor thanked the other 45 States for "seeing the wisdom of Vermont".

In office, Proctor discovered patronage jobs were few, but he did secure an appointment to the Interstate Commerce Commission for his old law partner and Civil War comrade, Wheelock Veazey. He named two civilians to the Rebellion Records Board and he selected as his personal secretary, lawyer Frank Partridge, who "proved himself to be an excellent administrator and advisor". [166]

At the time of Proctor's appointment the Department of the Army was beset by many woes, "atrophy and neglect" among them. [168] There were sporadic clashes with the Plains Indians, but no major war. The Army had not changed much since the Civil War, although the country had undergone many changes during those 35 years. Internal reforms and reorganization [168] were essential to the Army's operation and effectiveness. This was Proctor's strength: an understanding of administrative social, strategic and military issues.

Following the Civil War, in 1865, the U.S. Army consisted of one million Union soldiers. [169] By 1869, there were 37,000 soldiers, and with further reduction, by 1889, the U.S. Army numbered 25,400 enlisted men and 2,000 officers. Line and Staff were the main components.

The Line was a combat force of over 22,000 officers and men and the bulk of the line was comprised of 25 infantry regiments. [169] The staff was comprised of ten administrative bureaus directly under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of War. A major asset for Proctor was his compatibility with General John M. Schofield, thus avoiding the disputes that had plagued preceding Secretaries of War. [172] Schofield had an understanding of his position and communicated with Proctor easily.

The most powerful of the administrative bureaus under Proctor was that of the Adjutant General whose duties included issuing orders, personal transfers and records. [170] The Judge Advocate was the Army's highest legal officer and the Quartermaster General managed transportation and construction. Also under Proctor's jurisdiction were the officers overseeing Subsistence, Medical Care, Pay and Ordnance as well as the Corps of Engineers and the Signal Corps.

Proctor made a difference in four major areas. His first accomplishment was the reorganization of the Civil War Pension records. Claims amounted to nearly one third of all federal outlays and, by 1889, amounted to \$89,000,000 in pensions and compensation. [176] That figure was double all the expenditures of the War Department that year. In November 1886, there were 50,000 unanswered requests for military records in the Adjutant General's office and 10,000 medical claims in the Surgeon General's office.

The trouble lay partly with the fact that the Bureau of Pensions (in the Interior Department) was ultimately responsible for the ruling on these claims but the War Department held the records on 403,000 muster rolls in the Adjutant General's office. Medical records were located in over 22,000 hospital books held by the Surgeon General's office. [176] The Pension Office was required to send a formal request to the War Department for each claim in question.

A Vermonter, Captain Fred Ainsworth, was put in charge and, by 1887, had eliminated the backlog in his division, the Records and Pension Division. Ainsworth also worked on a permanent solution. Hospital record entries were recopied on index cards "that could be sorted by regiment and arranged alphabetically within each regiment". [177] By 1889, Ainsworth's staff had completed nearly 5,00,000 medical record cards out of a total of 7,000,000. In the Adjutant General's Office, clerks worked with the muster rolls which were deteriorating with so much handling. A Senate committee recommended that they adopt Captain Ainsworth's system.

When Secretary Proctor took office he recognized the need for further improvement. By July 1889, there were still 40,000 unanswered claims in the Adjutant's office. Proctor then recommended to the Board of Business Methods [178] that the records of both the medical and military branches be consolidated into a single office [a method he had used successfully in the marble business where he had combined "disparate and sluggish firms into one large...company"]. [179] In July 1889, orders were issued to combine 14 divisions into a new Records and Pension Division as part of the office of the Secretary of War with a staff of 700 and the capable Captain Ainsworth at the helm. After three months the backlog disappeared, and in its first year the division had answered over 340,000 requests. All this was just in time for the "Billion Dollar Congress" when Congress passed the Disability Act of 1890 permitting veterans to receive pensions even if their disabilities were not service-connected. [180-1]

Proctor's second administrative success was getting Congress to reinstate the position of Assistant Secretary of War, a position that had fallen into disuse. This office relieved the Secretary from less important details of the work and provided an acting Secretary during the times the Secretary himself was absent from Washington.

His third accomplishment was to improve the quality of life for the soldier, and to professionalize the structure of officer service. A major and

long-standing problem of the Army was desertion. [182] During the last quarter of the 19th Century from 1875-1889, desertion averaged 11% annually. At times the rate reflected the country's economy. The Depression of 1870 saw a decline in 8%, but in more prosperous times the rate was about 15%. (182) When Proctor took office in 1889 the official desertion rate was 11.2%. In December 1891, when he resigned as Secretary of War, it had been halved. There were 2835 desertions, or 6.2%, the lowest since the Civil War.

Secretary Proctor saw that many changes would be required to alter the system and lessen the rate of desertion. One method he devised to improve the life of the soldier was to "dismantle the Post Trader System". [184] Pre-1889, the War Department sold licenses to civilian merchants who had an exclusive right to sell supplies such as toiletries, stationery and clothing items. They also made available beer, alcohol and billiard tables. This outright monopoly was intended to encourage traders to settle in remote areas [185] but over the years their presence became oppressive. Many abused their rights. For the soldier, the prices were high and the alcohol poor. As a man of temperance, Proctor deplored the fact that soldiers were encouraged to use alcohol at all.

In some locations post canteens were managed by soldiers [186] as an alternative to the traders. These canteens were authorized in February 1889 to sell beer and light wine by the drink. Lower prices and social activities such as dominos, ten pins and billiards were encouraged with funds taken from canteen profits. By September the canteens were doing well and more were set up at all posts, post traders or not. The new canteens and the policy of serving alcohol by the glass dealt a fatal blow to the traders. [187] In January 1890, Proctor asked Congress for \$150,000 to build canteens, amusement centers and gyms. While recognizing the soldiers' penchant for alcohol, Proctor attempted to mollify the Women's Christian Temperance Union by allowing only beer to be sold and only on weekdays. [188] The WCTU had called the Army-serviced canteens a moral outrage and a desecration of the Sabbath. By December 1891, when Proctor left the War Department, there were more than 60 canteens. The number of post traders fell from 85 to 22. [189]

Since before the Civil War the military had held Sunday dress inspections and parades. They were lengthy and tedious and unpopular with the soldiers. Civil War Generals Philip Sheridan and William T. Sherman thought the Sunday Morning Dress kept up "decency, sobriety, good order". [189] But another old soldier, General Schofield, sided with Proctor, and in June 1889, President Harrison signed the termination orders abolishing the Sunday Dress Inspection as of August 1891. [190]

Another unpopular military tradition was the Roll Call formation at tattoo, 9 p.m. [190] The soldiers were required to retire to their barracks and wait outside for Roll Call. To make military life more palatable, Proctor, in November 1889, ordered the first sergeants to inspect barracks each night to determine if any soldiers were absent.

Proctor proposed a new method of recruiting in a further effort to improve the lot of the soldier and reduce desertion. Prior to 1889, recruiting officers were in 30 or 40 large cities and had little control over where recruits were assigned. [190] Proctor had been a recruiting officer himself in Rutland, Vermont, in 1864-65 and believed recruits from rural areas

would be less inclined to desert. With this in mind, Proctor and the War Department officials instigated a recruiting program in upstate New York which they hoped would attract recruits who would be less likely to desert. The recruiting officers would be selecting men for their own regiments. In a period of two years this new method was established in 40 small towns and rural areas and was successful.

Secretary Proctor's revamping of the aforementioned military practices boosted soldiers' morale and was of substantial benefit to the Army. All of Proctor's improvements thus far had been accomplished by administrative fiat. Other changes needed Congressional approval.

Working with Congress was greatly to Proctor's liking and brought out the politician in him. He could work with the Republican Congress although, because the majority was small, he had to work assiduously to improve military life by legislation. He was helped by public awareness of the problem. The five-year enlistment period was too long. The justice system and the treatment of enlisted men by officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, were both being questioned. These were issues that required Congressional attention and approval.

In a series of articles written in August 1889, Frank Woodward of the *St. Louis Dispatch* described the horrors, miseries and injustices faced by the typical army recruit. Woodward enlisted in the army and was stationed at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis from where he wrote. The story of his enlistment was also recorded in the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Philadelphia Record*. The public was sympathetic and a Court of Inquiry was set up by Secretary Proctor resulting in changes at Jefferson Barracks. [195] The Secretary's Annual Report of 1889 supplied Congress with details of the soldiers' life and treatment. Proctor asked for many reforms: in military justice, the court martial, length of enlistment, increased pay for non-commissioned officers and more post schools.

The post schools were first authorized in 1886, to teach military subjects, but Proctor wanted to offer more math, engineering, surveying and science. [196] He felt shorter enlistments would discourage desertions and higher pay for "non-coms" would encourage "brighter and more ambitious" men. Backed by top army officers, he recommended a three-year enlistment, the right to purchase discharge during peacetime, and retention of part of pay to discourage "french leave". The three-year enlistment and right to purchase discharge in particular he felt would help to discourage desertion by an unhappy soldier. Since these measures would require a larger appropriation, Proctor wrote a new bill. The legislation introduced into Congress in January 1890 called for an optional three-year enlistment, improved rations, retention of pay, arrest of deserters by civil officers, and purchase of discharge. [198] The bill was passed by the House on April 5, 1890, and by the Senate in early June. The bill, called "An Act to Prevent Desertion", was signed by President Harrison in mid-June.

The sum of four dollars per month was retained from the enlistee's pay during the first year and would be held until discharge, or in the case of desertion, forfeited. [198] The enlistment term remained at five years, but now the soldier had the option of discharge after three years or he could buy his discharge after one year. Rations were improved by the introduction of vegetables. Civil authorities were empowered to arrest deserters and pass

them over to the military. The *Army Navy Journal* predicted the new regulations would result in "substantial good", [199]

The next important matter for Proctor to face was that of military justice. During the late 19th century soldiers were tried under military law known as the Articles of War. There were 34 articles, of which 32 provided no guidelines as to appropriate punishment. [199] Punishments were at the discretion of the individual court martial hearing the case. Proctor, in his Annual Report of 1889, stated: "There is nothing to prevent the imposition of the lightest penalty for the gravest offense or of the most severe for a trivial one. Variableness of courts martial and the great disparity of punishments prevailing in the different military departments destroy one of the most essential elements in the proper administration of any code of law..." Here was evidence of the "lawyer turned business man turned politician" looking for a "systematic application of the law". [200]

At times infraction of military law was potentially serious, yet in peacetime Proctor felt the law "demands lighter penalties". He also "called for an overhauling of the Articles of War". There were far too many courts martial; as many as one for every two enlisted men in 1889. That alone indicated a need for change. Proctor detected a "vital defect somewhere", adding, "when these judicial proceedings become so commonplace, how can they maintain their force and dignity"?

In 1889, there were three types of courts martial: a general court martial, a regimental court martial and a garrison court martial. The garrison court martial was before three officers, and with the few officers serving at many small western posts, it became a lengthy, tedious process. Until his trial, a soldier was held in confinement, usually at the guard house, and then was often declared innocent after having suffered much embarrassment. [201] Proctor wrote in early 1890, it was "all wrong". "When a soldier is sent to the Guard House, every day he is kept there tends to make him a poorer instead of a better soldier". [201]

Another change Proctor recommended was that the Judge Advocate could no longer retire with the prosecution to give legal advice. It gave the impression of the court having an advantage of "conniving". [201] Instead, the Judge Advocate must give his views in open court.

Summary Courts were proposed as a reform - to eliminate "evils" of the court martial system. Summary Courts had long been advocated by the Military Affairs committee and others for reform. These courts "were to consist of a single individual", the line officer second in rank at the post of the accused. [202] He would hear all cases on the docket of garrison and regimental courts and decide - all within a period of 24 hours of the arrest. The accused would still have the right to a garrison or regimental court martial if desired. Senator Hawley of Connecticut, Chairman of the Military Affairs committee, brought Proctor's recommendations to the Senate floor.

In February 1890, another military justice scandal erupted. The previous fall, Lieutenant Steele, an officer in Private Dell P. Wild's cavalry troop at Fort Yates, North Dakota, "had ordered Wild to assist him in putting a canvas on the roof of a shed near his quarters". [203] Wild refused, claiming it was the work of the Quartermasters. The lieutenant and private had a verbal exchange: Steele cursed Wild, called him "a deserter", struck him sending his "hat flying...into a tub of water". Steele then proceeded to pre-

sent charges of insubordination and confined Wild to the guard house to await trial. However, as it turned out, the Judge Advocate at Wild's trial was the same Lt. Steele. Wild objected. His objection was disregarded and he was given a heavy sentence, including a dishonorable discharge, a year at hard labor and forfeiting of all pay allowances. The *St. Paul Globe* first broke the story on February 18, and the St. Paul Museum took out an ad in the *St. Paul Pioneer* in March displaying great enthusiasm for Wild's case and the soldier's cause. On February 22, the *New York World* headlined "Tyranny in the Army", and the *Chicago Herald* followed suit. [204] When the details of the case in South Dakota began to circulate, the War Department found itself in a difficult spot. Proctor, on February 20, went to President Harrison and the following day an order was issued "remitting the unexecuted portion" of Wild's sentence and "condemning the sentence...as excessive" and Steele's behavior as "grossly improper". [204-5] Proctor ordered Steele court-martialed and confined to post for three months. [205] He was guilty of "conduct unbecoming an officer".

However, at Steele's trial evidence surfaced that Wild had been court-martialed five times previously and was considered a difficult character. Steele was praised as a good officer. [206] It was a mixed-up affair but it proved the inadequacies of the court martial system in small remote posts and became another plus for the soldier. Further, Proctor ordered on March 18, 1890, that a suitable officer be designated as a defense counsel for an accused soldier if requested. [207]

The Articles of War were then overhauled, efforts to create Summary Courts were made and, by October, both measures became law. [207-8] The military community was satisfied with Secretary Proctor's efforts, proclaiming in the *Army Navy Journal* of February, 1891, that "present administration of the War Department was one of the most progressive in the history of the Army" and that Proctor had been "quick to recognize the imperative necessity" for changes in the military justice system. [209] When Proctor left office in December, 1891, the desertion rate was at the lowest of the post-Civil War era. [211]

Proctor had also set about to professionalize the Officer Corps. In 1889, the Army lacked the means to measure the competency of its officers. [213] Only those in the Engineer, Ordnance and Medical Corps required evaluation. Advancement for junior officers was "slow and full of inequities". [213] It could take 17 years for an infantry lieutenant to advance to the rank of captain. The limited number of vacancies was the result of a glut of Civil War veterans in the higher ranks. When retirement was first introduced in 1861, it was compulsory to retire at age 64 or by "application" after 40 years. There was also a limited retired list of 400, legislated in 1882. This list enabled the government to retire those officers disabled or incapacitated under age 64. Then there was the system of regimental promotion - officers to be promoted only within their assigned regiments and on the basis of date of seniority within the regiment. [214] Progress had been made with the legislation of 1878 and 1883, but it was not enough. In 1889, the number of officers on the "limited" list was 400, and by law was not to exceed 400. Ordinarily, those who should have qualified for retirement, could not. Junior officers were having to perform duties that their seniors should have been doing, but were not receiving promotions or pay increases, which brought about severe morale problems. [215]

In his 1889 Annual Report, Proctor recommended a non-competitive examination system to select out those officers unqualified for promotion. [215] Schofield and Proctor's predecessors had put forth this plan. Proctor noted that the American Navy, as well as principal European countries, had instituted such non-competitive exams. The system would also encourage officers to keep up with developments. [216] To combat the "lineal promotion" problem, Schofield had put forth a proposal to allow officers to advance by branch of service, rather than by regiment. [216] Proctor did not support Schofield's plan but said "it had much to commend it". Finally, to ease the system, Proctor recommended the "retired limit" list be expanded to 450 from 400.

It happened that there were just 50 incapacitated officers ready to retire at that time, and adding 50 more would open up the promotion schedule creating a ripple effect throughout the officer corps. [217] The *Army Navy Journal* called it a promotion for all. [222] In March 1890, Secretary Proctor sent bills to congress asking for the exams and lineal promotions, calling them "exceedingly important".

The bills passed through the Senate and, later, the House with a few modifications suggested by Schofield. [217] One exempted first lieutenants from lineal promotion, and a second, which underlined the strength of Civil War veterans, exempted them from the examinations. [218] Proctor wasn't keen on this appearance of favoritism and proposed a lesser exam, but still an examination. [218] He proposed a board of officers who were also Civil War veterans and suggested that officers who failed twice be retired. Non-West Point officers and men who had served in the Civil War were retired, but West Point graduates were discharged with one year's pay. This became law October 1, 1890.

The law, as passed, established the professionalism of Army promotions. They were "fair and predictable". Examinations ensured the competency of all officers below the rank of major, and lineal promotions of the line officers below the rank of general, with the exception of first lieutenants. [219] The examination consisted of two parts: mental/professional and physical. Those who failed would be on a newly-established limited retired list. Proctor was very pleased with the bill, so much so that he called upon those "on the hill" responsible for its passage. [220-222]

Aside from the work with Congress to ease up promotions and to professionalize the Army, Secretary Proctor made use of War Department directives. [223] In April, 1890, he ordered a record to be maintained by the department of "services, efficiency and special qualifications of all officers below the rank of colonel" including a report by the officer himself and one by his commanding officer. These reports were to be used primarily in drawing orders for temporary duty, detached or special duty which included prized assignments; ie. recruiting officer, instructor, aide. These efficiency reports were important. Before 1890, there had been no way to qualify the capacity of Army officers, or for officers to seek transfer from remote western outposts. Here again, the *Army Navy Journal* praised Proctor for his "desire to reform". A Proctor directive to regulate the appointment of civilians as officers failed the Senate. [224] He settled instead for a new regulation requiring demanding physical and mental exams, but it gave those with a military background an edge.

In addition to the reorganization of the War Department, a matter of immediate importance was one of defining the military strategy of the United States. Most important was the long overdue issue of coastal defenses. Advances in military power during the Civil War, such as the rifled cannon and armed steel warships, made masonry forts along the coast obsolete. [226] In 1885, Congress created the Board of Fortification (the Endicott Board) to oversee plans to fortify 27 harbors and the Canadian-American lakes border. Some doubted the possibility of an external attack and were reluctant to spend the huge sum of \$126,000,000 to upgrade fortification. [226] However, there were political gains to be made as Proctor wrote in a message to President Harrison in 1888. Congress won the debate over those reluctant to spend, and the first monies allocated were to "order steels and forging from civilian suppliers". [226] The political aspect was almost equal to that of military defense. Late in 1889, Proctor wrote to President Harrison that the Cleveland administration had funded money for a steel navy; now coastal defense was left to the the Harrison administration.

The Pacific states were "vitally interested" and would provide strong support for the Republican camp. The National Guard, in the process of renewing itself, would also be served by new fortifications. Finally, the publicity involved in selecting sites would attract public attention. [228] Proctor's duty was to secure the money from Congress. The "Billion Dollar Congress" was already willing to spend on veterans' pensions and large federal construction projects. Proctor was "generally" responsible for the awarding of contracts and for "overseeing the purchase and development of sites". Here Proctor took considerable advice from experienced officers and from General Schofield, General Nelson Miles of the Pacific Division and General O.O. Howard of the Atlantic Division. The "Billion Dollar Congress" was happy to appropriate this kind of money for their home districts. In one case, where Proctor wanted to update the arsenal at Watervliet, New York, he ran into difficulties on Capitol Hill. Proctor and the Ordnance Department wanted to add a wing to the existing federally-owned facility. This would enable the determination of a realistic price for ordnance to be used as a "yardstick" against prices set by civilian manufacturers. Proctor conceded some points because there were Congressmen who favored private manufacturers. In the end he prevailed and the Watervliet Arsenal was enlarged.

The influence of this Secretary from Vermont was also felt in the debate over enlistment of Indians. Proctor originally was "reluctant" but then came to favor their enlistment as a strategy to deter Indian uprisings. For a long time Indians had been used by the military as paid scouts and guides. Then in 1866, the Army was authorized to change the status of some 1,000 Indian scouts, allowing their enlistment for generally six months. In fact, many Indian scouts reenlisted several times. Army officers and civilians both encouraged full recognition of Indian scouts as soldiers, but not until Proctor came to the War Department was further progress made. [230] In November, 1889, Major William H. Powell suggested enlistment of "an entire regiment of Indians...to promote...education, discipline and civilization". [231] Schofield believed it was too late for such a policy - he thought that perhaps twenty years earlier it might have changed warlike Indians into "faithful soldiers". He was skeptical that the Indian soldier would or could

adapt to the very new situations; ie. "labor disputes in an urban setting" and the Powell proposal was dropped.

In January another plan came from the Interior Department. The Indian Inspector, Frank C. Armstrong, suggested the enlistment of Indians for three years. The reaction at the War Department was mixed. Five generals were opposed, including two who were Indian fighters. Four generals showed interest. All agreed that if the Indians were to be in the Army as soldiers they should be in small units of 100 or less. They all recognized the Indian's value as a scout but felt he might lose his independence and value through military training. [232] They were also unsure whether Indians would fight against their own people. [231] After negotiations between Proctor and Schofield, Proctor authorized Lt. E. W. Casey, who was already training a company of scouts at Fort Keough, Montana, Department of Dakota, to increase their numbers to 100. [233] At the same time Proctor authorized General Wesley Merritt at his post in the Department of Missouri to do the same - try an experiment with a company of Indians. Proctor was more positive now and more ready to accept the Indian as a soldier than was Schofield.

An important development in Proctor's thinking came in March, 1890. He asked Lt. Guy Howard if "it would be advisable to have some Apache prisoners drilled as soldiers". [234] Proctor felt it might relieve their despondency and could eventually make soldiers of them. It was the first time Proctor seriously considered turning the Indians into soldiers. At Fort Keough and Fort Reno the two experiments under Lieutenants Casey and H. W. Wheeler were successful and Proctor was interested in expanding the operation by training Indians in companies. He wrote to General Alexander McCook in the Department of Arizona, which included Apache territory, noting Indians could be used as "mounted scouts...or as infantry". Proctor felt training would give them discipline and that they might actually be used in suppressing outbreaks amongst their own people. "If giving them employment and instructing them tends towards their civilization and keeping them in peace, of course, it is desirable." [234]

By now, General Schofield was enthusiastic after receiving reports from Lt. Wheeler's company, and Proctor was so encouraged that he asked for an increase in the number of Indian soldiers. He requested the calling-up of up to 5,000 Indians as part of the Army's total strength of 30,000, but in the final bill he sent to Congress he called for "not less than 2,000 Indians."

There was another reason why Proctor and Schofield were encouraging Indian enlistment and that was the troublesome phenomenon of the Sioux Ghost Dancers. It was hoped that by directing the Indians' energies into the Army, the troubles might subside. [236] In November, Schofield wanted to enlist Indian soldiers from the Sioux in the South Dakota area. This occurred as the Ghost Dance "craze was mounting" and after General Miles, on request from General Brooks, asked for additions to the Indian police force at Pine Ridge Reservation. Miles (Division of Missouri) was authorized by Schofield to enlist 1200 Indians "for service in conjunction with the infantry and cavalry units" but Miles took no action. [236]

Plans for the Indian programs Proctor and Schofield and others had promoted died, as funding for artillery increases failed in Congress. Schofield recommended that the War Department, on its own initiative, enlist about 2,000 Indians as soldiers. This occurred three weeks after the encounter at

Wounded Knee which brought the Indian troubles to national attention. In March, 1891, Secretary Proctor, on his own, authorized "an Indian company or troop in each of 26 white infantry and cavalry regiments west of the Mississippi". Each was to be composed of 55 Indians totalling 1500 future Indian soldiers. As a result the number of Indian scouts was reduced to 150. [237]

Proctor was thinking on several different levels: military, humanitarian and political. His plan provided the Indians with a "safe and acceptable" outlet for their energies and Proctor felt it would lessen "their hostility towards white rule". In Proctor's 1891 report he noted that their livelihood had gone with the "extermination of game", but enlistment could help by giving employment to the "more warlike"...[238] He also thought Indians would be instilled with American values. The Indian would develop habits of "obedience, cleanliness and punctuality" [traits always important to Proctor]. They would learn English and cut their hair, among other things. They would receive instruction in carpentry, storekeeping and agriculture. As he did in his own marble company, Proctor discouraged drinking of alcohol, thereby avoiding its evils. Proctor saw social control as being important to the Indian recruitment experiment. He saw the Indian program as the "cheapest and best insurance against Indian troubles". [239]

As a rule the United States public distrusted a large standing Army, and Congress therefore was unwilling to increase its size. For economic reasons it was also deemed prudent to keep forces small. Thus, in May 1891, there was an unwillingness in Congress to increase the Indian enlistment. By September 1891, nearly 500 Indians were in the Army. Proctor watched their progress carefully and wrote to President Harrison that it was the "most important thing that has been done since I have been here". By the time Proctor resigned as Secretary in December, 1891, there were seven fully-manned and seven partially-manned companies and troops. [240]

More controversial was Proctor's stance on the massacre at Wounded Knee. The Ghost Dance was a religious ceremony that took place among the Sioux. It was seen as an outlet for the frustrations of reservation life and had become, by 1890, a religious event of great intensity. So much so that government officials on both the Sioux reservation and in Washington feared violence. In November Indian agents understood they would not be able to manage the situation and military forces were deployed. [241] But this only further inflamed the Indians and the military found themselves involved not only in maintaining order, but also in "rounding up hostile Indians". Proctor followed the events carefully, relying on Commanding General Schofield and the Commander of the Missouri Division, Nelson Miles. Schofield was stationed in Washington; and Miles, in Rapid City, South Dakota. On December 29, 1890, at Wounded Knee, soldiers of the 7th Cavalry killed over 150 Sioux, including women and children.

The incident began when "soldiers were searching for weapons among the Indians who had recently surrendered". [242] Prior to the disarming, the Indians were divided into two groups. One consisted of 100 braves occupying the council area outside camp, and the other of 230 women and children inside the camp. While disarming the Indians, two troops (100 men) were positioned between the braves and the Indian women and children. The remaining 350 men of the 7th Cavalry were positioned beyond the camp

and council area. Some young Indian warriors, incensed at giving up their weapons, and perhaps by the incantations of the medicine men, suddenly pulled out rifles and fired at the cavalry men who then returned fire. The Indian warriors broke away and returned to their women and children inside the camp. The 7th Cavalry, using three-pound shells, fired into the Indian camp, killing many.

The national press seized upon the story and it soon became controversial with three differing versions of the events. The descriptions came from General Miles, Schofield and Secretary Proctor. Proctor's decision was to fully support the 7th Cavalry and Col. James Forsyth. Proctor chose to blame the Sioux believing the incident "grew out of circumstances for which the Indians themselves were entirely responsible". [245]

A century later it seems clear that Proctor and Schofield were "more interested in absolving the Army". Both, within a short time, took actions indicating a desire to keep the event at Wounded Knee under control. It is difficult to understand Proctor's position. He may have wanted to be rid of the issue rather than deal with a court of inquiry into what Miles called "a horrible massacre". [247] In the end it appears that Proctor, as Secretary of War, felt his loyalty was with the Army - his own Civil War experience as a regimental commander reinforcing it. [248]

The determination of military policy was the fourth area in which Proctor's influence was felt. The two most important accomplishments were reorganization of the artillery and increasing the status of the National Guard. Schofield recommended and Proctor concurred, that an increase in the artillery regiments from five to seven was needed because of the move to augment coastal defenses. It was the duty of the artillery to garrison the new defenses and train the National Guard to service them. Increasing the number of regiments would add more enlisted men, but not officers due to an excess of artillery lieutenants, thus easing that other problem of promotions. [250]

The proposal had a complicated history and underwent a difficult process in the 51st Congress. When a new Democratic 52nd Congress was elected, all amendments failed and the bill increasing the number of artillery regiments was delayed and finally dropped. It didn't surface again for a long time. [252-5]

The National Guard, also called the Militia, underwent a revival from 1870 to 1900. The labor strikes of the period frightened some in the upper classes who called for its strengthening. The state governments were mainly responsible for funding the Guard, but it was also, at times, "directly subsidized by wealthier citizens"; ie. in the building of fortress-like armories. [255-6] Here, again, social benefits were considered. National Guard membership emphasized "discipline, loyalty and physical fitness" and the public still consisted of many veterans of the Civil War who believed in the "camaraderie of the uniform". These feelings of support for the Guard, and the newly-created organization of National Guard Officers, helped considerably in securing Congressional passage of appropriations, increasing from \$200,000 to \$400,000. This was the first time since 1808 that militia funding had been increased.

Proctor acceded to these increases. He also continued the relationship between the War Department and the National Guard by sending regular Army officers, as well as enlistees, to the Guard's training programs to

advise or critique - a relationship begun in the early 1880's. He also persuaded Congress to pass an increase in the number of regular Army officers who taught military subjects at civilian colleges from 50 to 75. [256-7]

Proctor also made his mark in the future administration of the War Department. He abolished the Division system whose work had been absorbed by the Departments. The old system had become redundant and administratively useless. For example, the Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the Atlantic held sway over the same area. The Division of the Missouri administered the Great Plains and the Southwest United States during the Indian wars, but by 1891, these wars were over. The Division of the Pacific was easily absorbed by the military department along the west coast.

On another front, Proctor proposed enlisting more blacks in the Army, especially the artillery which heretofore had been a totally white branch of the Army. Proctor believed blacks could do the "technical" work required and in his 1889 report he proposed that one or two of the proposed new artillery regiments be black units. [258] He believed blacks made good soldiers and again thought that social benefits would accrue from their enlistment in the artillery. "Discipline and instruction would benefit...be a public good". Congress turned down both the increase in the artillery and in the black regiments.

Proctor then made recognition of the blacks of the cavalry who performed gallantly during the incidents of the Ghost Dance. Four companies of the black 9th Cavalry had marched in the worst of winter weather to "rescue elements of the white 7th Cavalry". [259] Their leader, Major Guy V. Henry, wrote Proctor asking him to recognize the valor of the 9th by transferring one troop to Fort Myer, Virginia, a post considerably more agreeable than the Nebraska assignment. In June 1891, Troop K left for Potomac duty. This was a matter of importance being the first time a black unit had been stationed east of the Mississippi since Reconstruction.

When Jefferson Davis died, December 6, 1889, in New Orleans, an issue of protocol arose. Davis had been Secretary of War during the 1850's but he had also been the leader of the Confederacy and had, to the end, "refused to renounce his role" and never tried to "regain his federal citizenship". This did not sit well with Union veterans and Proctor initially tried to ignore the usual protocol: lowering the department flag and placing black crepe around Davis' portrait. He told Washington reporters he didn't want to "revive memories". The mayor of New Orleans wasn't going to allow Jefferson Davis to be forgotten as a Secretary of War and he wired Proctor to that effect. The telegram was published and Proctor was forced to reply but his reply was not good enough. [261] Southern newspaper editors of the *Atlanta Constitution and Chronicle*, the *Memphis Appeal* and the *New Orleans Picayune* heaped a torrent of abuse on Redfield Proctor. In Aberdeen, Mississippi, he was burned in effigy. [261] Still, Proctor stayed the course and Northern papers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald*, the *Philadelphia Times*, the *Chicago Journal* and the *Kansas Journal* agreed that he had no alternative, adding that his response was dignified and unprejudicial.

A similar situation came about with the death of former Secretary of War, William Belknap, who had served under President Grant and was accused and impeached for "selling traderships on Indian reservations to unscrupulous parties". When Belknap died in 1890, the War Department

flags were lowered. [260] This time papers both North and South hit Proctor hard, accusing him of "inconsistency". Who was better - a rebel or a "boddler"? Proctor let the tempest ride itself out.

On official trips or tours outside of Washington, Secretary Proctor enjoyed the perquisites of office while inspecting military posts. These trips were nearly all scheduled after Congress had adjourned or was not sitting. He preferred to be in Washington to keep an eye on his legislation as it passed through Congress. In 1889, due to the illness of his younger son, Redfield, age 11, and wanting to keep in touch with his new duties as Secretary of War, Proctor travelled only as far as the midwest in company with General Schofield. By August 1890, feeling more at home with his job and happy to leave muggy Washington, Proctor and Schofield travelled to the northeastern frontier visiting New York from Fort Niagara to Plattsburgh Barracks. He also visited the Ohio River Valley and forts between Columbia Barracks, Louisville Canal and Jefferson Barracks the same year. In 1891, he conducted tours of inspection to the south and west where he enjoyed a month-long railroad trip to Tennessee, Georgia, Florida and the Gulf states, then on to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. In Arizona he toured over 300 miles of rough terrain to Apache Territory which he later described as "one of the highlights of the entire trip". [265] In the final days of 1891, he made his last inspection tour, visiting Minnesota, Nebraska and Wyoming. He had visited a good part of the American West while Secretary of War. When he stopped at Fort Sherman, Idaho, a newspaper correspondent wrote "everyone is anxious to see the man (Proctor) who had done so much for the service." [212]

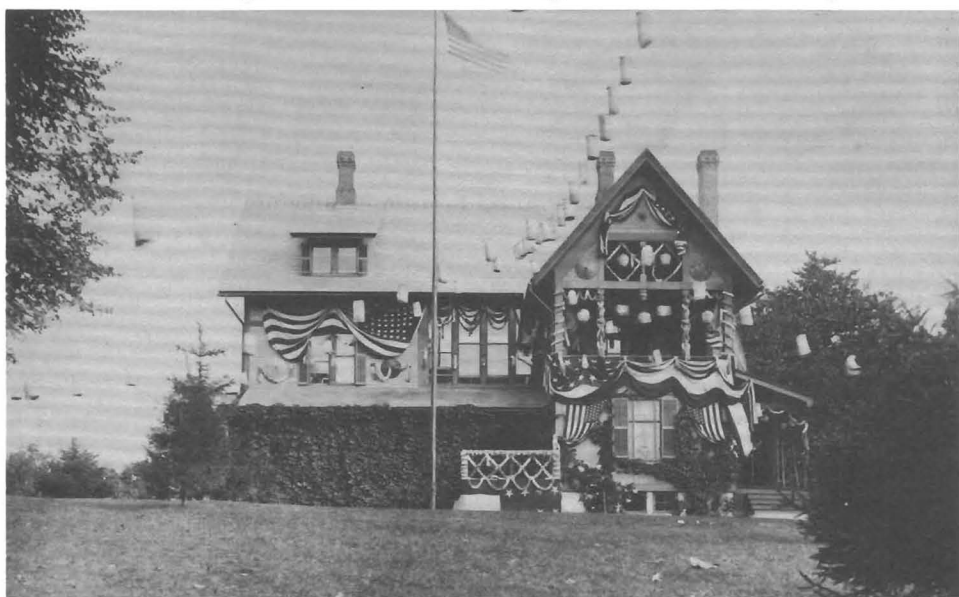
Redfield Proctor resided at 1701 Massachusetts, a home he leased his first year in Washington. For recreation he was quite skilled at billiards and whist and especially enjoyed driving his team of Morgan horses, brought from Vermont, through the streets of Washington. On one occasion he was reprimanded by District police for driving "at too fast a clip". [266]

Secretary Proctor continued to travel back to Vermont to keep a political eye on a potential Senate seat or Congressional vacancy as well as to visit his hometown of Proctor where his marble interests were still of great importance and interest to him. Although his elder son, Fletcher, ran the business, Proctor himself was the controlling force. He also maintained his role as benefactor of the town of Proctor sending 100 volumes to the public library that he had established there.

As secretary, Proctor used his position to further the interests of the State of Vermont. In 1889, he brought Commanding General Schofield with him to the summer encampment of the Vermont National Guard. Then, in 1891, President Harrison agreed to be present at the dedication ceremonies of the Bennington Battle Monument and afterwards toured Vermont. Proctor took a first-hand interest in the Presidential visit, arranging transportation with the "local railroad magnates" and bringing in West Point cadets. Over 15,000 people attended the dedication of what was then the world's largest battle monument - a 300-foot granite obelisk. [269] President Harrison dined at Proctor's home by the Great Falls on the Otter Creek the evening of August 28, 1891. Colored lights and bonfires illuminated the town and surrounding hills as the president was welcomed by thousands.

In the fall of 1890, Proctor had sent Vermont Congressman John W. Stewart a draft proposing the construction of a four-company cavalry post "at or near" Essex Junction in northern Vermont. The land would be donated and the Federal Government would appropriate \$100,000 to construct the buildings. His reasoning for proposing such a location was to anticipate troubles with Great Britain. He warned of gunboats sailing down the St. Lawrence and through canals with the intent of "bombarding American cities on the Great Lakes". [270] The idea of cavalry positioned to ward off gunboats made for peculiar reasoning, but Proctor wanted a military defense post located in Vermont and besides, he liked horses. The location would "facilitate both the rapid assembly and advance of troops from all over New England". [271] His lobbying efforts failed, but Congress did give approval to the enlargement of the Plattsburgh Barracks in New York. It was said that Proctor "proved to be an outspoken advocate of progressive policies and an effective implementer of sorely needed reforms". [271]

During the 30 years "between the resignation of the high-powered Edwin M. Stanton, shortly after the Civil War, and the appointment of the brilliant Elihu Root at the turn of the century", Redfield Proctor was the "most talented" Secretary of War. [272] Upon the death of Secretary of the Treasury William Windom in 1891, Harrison offered the position to Proctor. Proctor declined having opted instead to serve his home state as U.S. Senator. He died in Washington in 1908 after serving in the Senate for 17 years.



PROCTOR FREE LIBRARY

Redfield Proctor's home in Proctor was decorated for President Harrison's visit August 27 and 28, 1891. Nine thousand colored Chinese lanterns were strung about the downtown area. Railroad headlights provided additional illumination. Bonfires flared from platforms erected around the town and on the surrounding hilltops. Following a torchlight procession of marble company employees, bombs and rockets were set off from barges anchored in the creek near the covered bridge. The newspapers called the event "a glorious end" to the presidential tour.